

BEST of the BLOG PLANETARY OBSERVATIONS..

From Mudd, Stiles & The Heath Monitor Files



Obama, our civil liberties hero -

The nation's chief executive extols the virtues of mandatory DNA testing of Americans upon arrest, even absent charges or a conviction. Obama said, "It's the right thing to do" to "tighten the grip around folks" who commit crime...posted by Mudd.

<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/03/obama-supports-dna-sampling-upon-arrest>

Meanwhile -

"An E.P.A. study last year estimated that \$335 billion would be needed simply to maintain the nation's tap water systems in coming decades. In states like New York, officials estimate that \$36 billion is needed in the next 20 years just for municipal wastewater systems." posted by Mudd

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/15/us/15water.html?hp>



Monumental monuments

This in from the lovely New York Times – "A new monument fight erupted this week when Representative Rob Bishop, Republican of Utah, said he had uncovered a 'secret' Interior Department memorandum suggesting that the federal government was considering

national monument designation for 14 huge blocks of land in nine states from Montana to New Mexico."

Some of America's finest places are National Monuments. Why not a few more to round things out? After all, most of the fruited plains have been trashed, sea to shining sea. Etc. Smart money says you preserve a few big hunks of intact wildlands on general principle. It helps that the tax-paying public already owns the lands in question anyway. Reckon they can decide what to do with their own property.

Once the whining is over, cooler heads will prevail. Maybe.

posted by Mudd

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/20/us/politics/20utah.html>

The Next Hundred Million America in 2050

Check out this excerpt from an NPR report about a man who's either annoyingly optimistic or insane. Joel Kotkin sees nothing but "aspiration cities" ahead. We think Mr. Kotkin needs a dose of reality and where better to get it than in The Z. So kiss our aspirations, Joel. get REAL.

Here is a bit of text...the link lies below..

By 2050, the U.S. will add a staggering 100 million people. Yet daunting as that seems, futurist Joel Kotkin lays out a sunny vision of a newly dynamic American economy and culture. For one thing, consider the alternative: Kotkin says other industrialized nations will struggle with stagnant, even shrinking populations. So, how will America accommodate so many more people? Think Houston, Phoenix, Las Vegas; and if that thought depresses you, Kotkin says, think again. He believes these "cities of aspiration" will replace traditional gateways, such as New York, in providing upward mobility to new arrivals. Kotkin also envisions a more diverse, older and self-sufficient form of suburbia, where three-generation households make a comeback, and technology allows more people to work at home. It's not the vision environmentalists might like (Denser, greener cities? Sorry, he says, Americans still love cars). But Kotkin says a "new localism" will produce its own energy savings.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=123211457>

Dr. Marc Farber, investing guru. His site is GloomBoomDoom.com.

On the other hand...meet Dr. Marc Farber...

Some of the American states have deficits as high as 45 percent of their revenue and increasing taxes to cover the gaps is not likely to work because people would just move elsewhere or leave the US altogether, Faber said. "When you look at the US... it's a total disaster, we're all doomed, we're doomed," he said.

The erudite Doctor also pronounced: "I don't have a very high opinion of Mr. Obama," Faber told "Squawk Box Europe." "I was negative of Mr. Bush but I think Mr. Obama makes him look like a genius."

Is There an Ecological Unconscious?

My colleague Mr. Mudd thinks this is rubbish, but I see a glimpse of truth at least in it all. neither of us, however, has the fortitude to analyse it. So analyse THIS yourself...

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31ecopsych-t.html?em>

"THE EDGE" & U2 and THE TALE OF FIVE CASTLES

A prevailing theme prevails...we once again ask, "Who are the good guys? Who are the bad guys?"

We all know U2 and the good work they have done to 'save the planet.' We can barely escape the good deeds of its lead singer Bono, and have taken comfort in the notion that the light U2 shines upon us can truly light the world.

Thus a recent story by Steve Lopez in the LA Times raised more than a few eyebrows. According to the report:



Go tell it on the mountain: The Edge doesn't need five homes here

The U2 guitarist is lining up political muscle and environmentalist star power to support constructing his eco-friendly castles on a pristine ridge near Malibu. What's greener? Not building at all.

Just so you know, it's not easy for me to refer to U2 guitarist David Evans as "The Edge." Sure, there was a time when I referred to myself as S. Lo. But I quickly realized that once you've gone gray, it's hard to get away with anything other than what's on the birth certificate.

And I can't keep a straight face when I tell you that the five eco-friendly castles Mr. Edge wants to carve into the top of a pristine ridge near Malibu already have names. There's "Clouds Rest" and "Panorama," "Shell House" and "Blue Clouds." And my personal favorite, "Leaves in the Wind." www.leavesinthewind.com

Here at The Zephyr, it all sounds so familiar...rich guys? Claiming to be 'green' but living fat opulent lifestyles and keeping everyone quiet by giving them a taste of green as well?

So familiar...

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/23/local/la-me-lopez23-2009dec23>

SPEAKING OF RICH WEASELS...

ANOTHER DAVID BONDERMAN UPDATE.

When we last visited Mr. Bonderman, the billionaire/philanthropist/private equity guru/bone cruncher had lost a pile of money during the global financial crisis, wiped out Washington Mutual, and saw his personal fortune plummet from \$3.3 billion in 2008 to just a billion and change in '09.

Now, a Google search gives us two new Bonderman updates.

First at: <http://www.altassets.com/private-equity-news/article/nz18016.html>

"TPG co-founder Bonderman bashes FDIC bank investment rules TPG co-founder Bonderman bashes FDIC bank investment rules."

"One of US giant TPG's co-founders has spoken out against Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation regulation of private equity's investment in struggling banks, saying that the rules are accelerating failures, according to Reuters.

"The FDIC has limited the percentage of ownership and control by outside investors due to concerns over funds exploiting the depressed assets of troubled banks by quickly selling them off.



"David Bonderman of TPG believes that turnaround firms are exactly what failing banks need in order to succeed."

But this *NY Times* story might give some insights into why Bonderman makes people nervous, most recently in Greece:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/business/14gret.html>

Called "Private Equity's Trojan Horse of Debt" by Gretchen Morgenson reports:

WHENEVER savvy private equity firms sell debt in the companies they own, buyer beware.

That's the lesson — learned the hard way — for bondholders in Wind Hellas, a Greek

mobile phone operator whose parent company defaulted on some of its debt payments last November.

A once-healthy company that is Greece's third-largest mobile phone operator, Wind Hellas was taken over in a 2005 buyout by two global private equity giants: Apax Partners out of London and the Texas Pacific Group, led by David Bonderman.

Before its acquisition, the company had a history of growth and very little debt. After Bonderman *et al* were done with Wind Hellas, it had been stripped of its good credit rating and left for dead, especially after a questionable "certificate payout" that included a mysterious and temporary spike in the value of those certificates.

Read the story.



AND FINALLY...NEED AN ESCAPE FROM ALL THIS BULLSHIT?

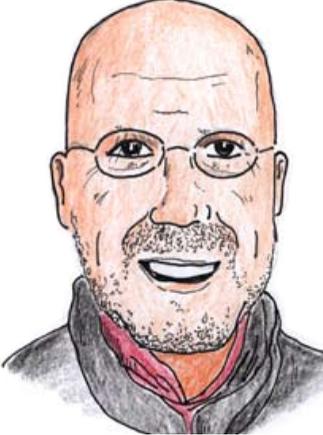
Moab's inventor/philosopher Mike Merritt may have just what you need to get away from it all. Check out his YouTube video! Mike once sold me a bag of dehydrated water and it really worked. But this bit of brilliance could change the

world...A world of 'Coasters.'

Keep dreaming Mike...we need more dreamers.



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MD



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We are coming to your country soon, and if in the midst of a conversation I call you a 'dickhead,' just remember that here in Australia, it's a term of endearment... 'Wanker,' on the other hand, is a whole new kettle of fish.

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Well...I guess Stiles will do another ad about the fact that it's Spring and the tourists are all coming back...

Yeah...another tedious Zephyr tradition.

www.texsriveways.com

